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ABSTRACT

A study investigated the major factors--demographic characteristics, job characteristics, and work experiences--related to commitment to teaching as a profession among Ohio teachers of vocational agriculture. The population was a random selection from the Ohio secondary school teachers of vocational agriculture listed in the 1983-84 directory. Mailed questionnaires resulted in an 81 percent return. Findings indicated that none of the demographic characteristic variables demonstrated either a substantial or a very strong relationship with the dependent variable, commitment to teaching as a profession. Job characteristic variables as a set failed to explain a significant unique portion of the variance in the dependent variable. A moderate positive relationship was found between commitment to teaching as a profession and feedback. The collective set of work experience variables explained a significant unique proportion of variance in the dependent variable. Most had a significant relationship with commitment to teaching as a profession, including vocational agriculture teacher cohesion, group attitudes toward the teaching profession of vocational agriculture, realization of expectation, first-job challenge, personal importance, and self-image. These variables were found to be the best predictors of commitment to teaching as a profession by Ohio teachers of vocational agriculture: personal importance, first-year job challenge, vocational agriculture teachers' cohesion, and self-image. (YLB)

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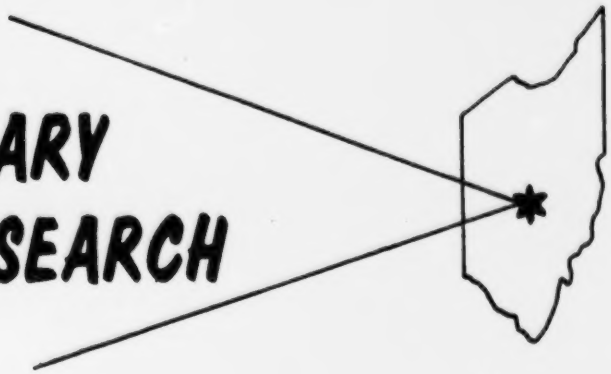

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION

The Ohio State University
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ED278814

COMMITMENT TO TEACHING AS A PROFESSION BY OHIO TEACHERS OF VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE

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INTRODUCTION

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

The quality of education is believed to be related to the degree of commitment of the men and women who serve as teachers in school systems. Teachers exercise subtle controls over education--what it is and what it can become--through their training, experience and behavior.

No one (Campbell, Cunningham, Nystrand & Usdan, 1980) would deny the power of a good and committed teacher in molding the minds of students (p. 276). The success of a nation depends upon its youth who have studied under teachers. Teachers who are committed to teaching as a profession are thought to be more effective than those who are not.

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COMMITMENT TO TEACHING AS A PROFESSION BY OHIO TEACHERS OF VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The primary purpose of the study was to investigate the major factors: demographic characteristics, job characteristics and work experiences, related to commitment to teaching as a profession among Ohio teachers of vocational agriculture.

The objectives of the study included:

1. To determine the level of commitment to teaching as a profession by Ohio teachers of vocational agriculture.

2. To determine the relationship between commitment to teaching as a profession and selected demographic variables: age, sex, marital status, tenure, program responsibility and educational experiences.

3. To determine the relationship between commitment to teaching as a profession and job characteristic variables: skill variety, job autonomy, shared responsibility, credit for work and feedback.

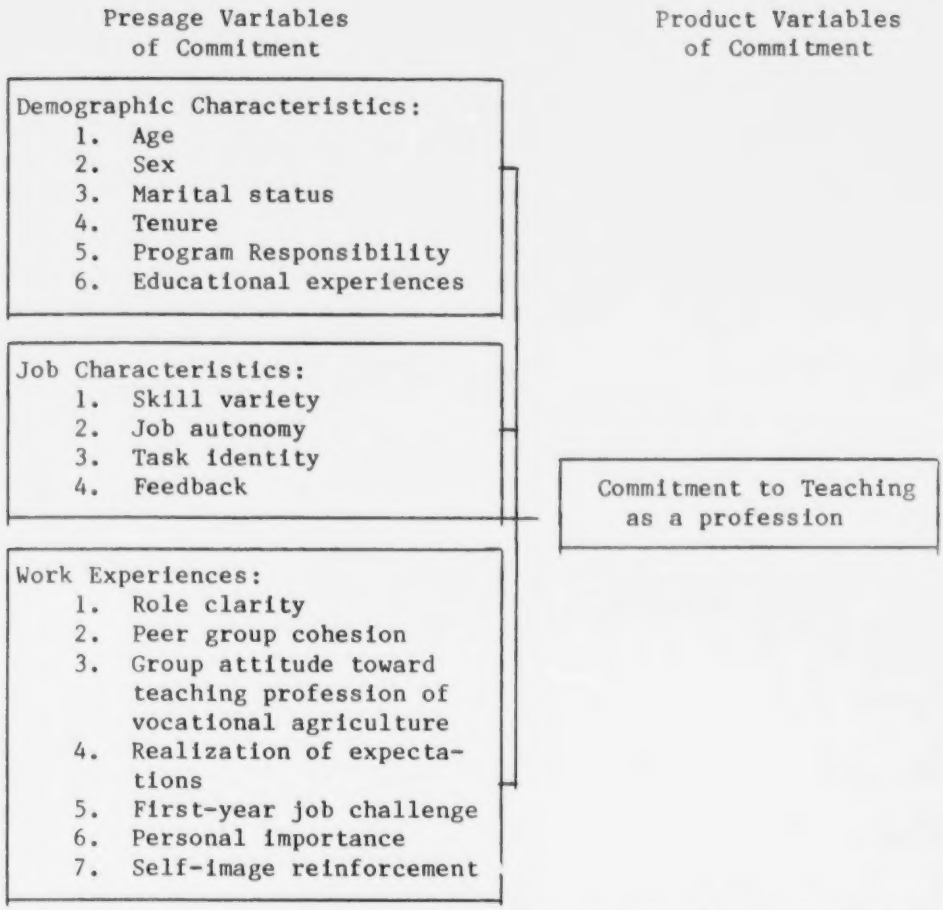
4. To determine the relationship between commitment to teaching as a profession and work experiences: role clarity, vocational agriculture teachers' cohesion, group attitude toward teaching profession of vocational agriculture, profession work, realization of expectations, first-year job challenge, personal importance, individual actions and self-image.

The variables in the study were derived from a model adapted from the works of Steers (1977) and of Suandi, McCracken & Smith (1982). Illustrated in Figure 1 are the independent (presage) variables and the dependent (product) variables for the study. Suandi, McCracken & Smith, (1982) in a study of agents in the Ohio Cooperative Extension Service, verified age, sex, tenure, skill variety, job autonomy, feedback, and all the work experience variables as potential predictors of organizational commitment.

METHODOLOGY

The population of the study was the Ohio secondary school teachers of vocational agriculture who were listed in the 1983-84 directory (N = 637). To get a representative sample from the population, every fifth name (with a random start) was chosen from the directory (n = 128).

Data were collected through mail questionnaires. The instrument was field tested before it was used in the investigation. Reliability values (Cronbach's alpha), for the various subscales ranged from .36 (Job Autonomy) to .93 (Professional Commitment) in the initial survey. Another reliability analysis was performed on the variables after a survey of the actual sample of the subjects. Reliability values for the various subscales ranged from .45 (Self-Image Reinforcement) to .87



Note: Adapted from "Antecedents and Outcomes of Organizational Commitment" by R. M. Steers, Administrative Science Quarterly, 1977, 22, 47.

Figure 1. The Circumstances of Commitment to Teaching as a Profession

(Realization of Expectations). Because of the low reliability coefficient of the independent variable: task identity (.53), the items making up the variable were broken into individual items and renamed: (a) shared responsibility; and (b) credit for work. They were individually analyzed. Similarly, the independent variable: self-image reinforcement, with a reliability coefficient of .45, was broken into individual items and renamed: (a) individual actions; and (b) self-image. They were also individually analyzed.

The questionnaire was mailed on October 17, 1983. A follow-up letter as well as another questionnaire (should the first one have been misplaced) was sent to non-respondents on November 14, 1983. By December 9, 1983, a total of 104 (81%°) of the subjects had returned usable questionnaires. Eight teachers were randomly drawn from the 24 non-respondents and interviewed by telephone. The non-respondent sample

was asked for information on demographic characteristics and the commitment to teaching as a profession variables. Information on other variables: job characteristics and work experiences which were not asked for due to high cost was treated as missing data. The variance among early respondents, late respondents and non-respondents on commitment to teaching, is shown in Table 1. The non-respondent sample was less committed to teaching than the respondent sample. For comparison purposes, the researcher cross-tabulated the percentage of respondents and non-respondents with the demographic variables. The non-respondent group, when compared to the respondent group, appeared more likely to be female, single, of less tenure and younger. These differences were not statistically significant ($p<.05$). There were also no differences between respondents and non-respondents in their areas of program responsibility.

Table 1

Analysis of Variance on Organizational Commitment Scores by Respondent Group

Source	Degree of Freedom	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F Ratio	F Prob.
Between groups	2	4876.3113	2438.1555	14.916	0.0001
Within groups	109	17817.2322	163.4608		
Total	111	22693.5430			

Note: Non-respondents' mean = 54.0 (n = 8)
Late respondents' mean = 81.2 (n = 16)
Early respondents' mean = 70.1 (n = 88)

There was a statistically significant difference between the two groups on their preparation toward entering the teaching profession of vocational agriculture. Respondents were more likely to have been traditionally prepared or non-traditionally prepared but possessing a bachelor's degree. Non-respondents were less likely to possess a bachelor's degree. The total response rate was 88%. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data. Pearson product moment correlation coefficients (r) were used to express direction and strength of relationships. The semi-partial multiple regression correlational coefficients technique was employed to determine the proportionate contribution of each individual independent variable to commitment to teaching. A stepwise multiple regression analysis was finally completed to find out the best predictors of commitment to teaching as a profession.

FINDINGS

A 7-point Likert type scale was used for the dependent variable measure. The mean score on the 7-point scale for the 104 respondents was 5.17. However, the mean score for the non-respondent sample was

3.60. Therefore, the adjusted mean value for the sample was 4.98 (((104 x 5.17) + (24 x 3.60))/128 = 4.86). A score of seven represented the greatest commitment and a score of one the least commitment.

The proportion of variance in commitment to teaching explained by the full model containing all significantly related independent variables was .62 (R^2). This is reported in Table 2.

Table 2

Semi-Partial Multiple Regression Coefficients for Sets of Independent Variables Found to be Significantly Correlated with Commitment to Teaching

Variable Set	k_A	k_B	sR^{2a}	F
Demographic characteristic variables	9	4	.0248	1.46
Job characteristic variable (feedback)	12	1	.0006	0.14
Work experiences	5	8	.4344	12.78[b]

[a]R^2 = .6175 [b]$p<.05$ (df = 4.90).

Demographic Characteristics

A significant unique proportion of variance in commitment to teaching as a profession by Ohio teachers of vocational agriculture was not explained by the cumulative set of demographic characteristics (sR^2 = .0248, F = 1.46, $p<.05$). None of the demographic characteristic variables demonstrated either a substantial or a very strong relationship with the dependent variable: commitment to teaching as a profession. However, the following demonstrated low relationships with the dependent variable (Table 3).

1. Age (r = .20).
2. Being married (r = .16).
3. Teaching mechanics (r = -.21).
4. Teaching farm management (r = .18).

Job Characteristic Variables

There was a moderate positive relationship between commitment to teaching as a profession and feedback (r = .30, $p<.001$) (Table 4). Credit for work, skill variety, job autonomy and shared responsibility were not related to the dependent variable. Job characteristic variables as a set failed to explain a significant unique portion of the variance in the dependent variable.

Work Experience Variables

The collective set of work experience variables explained a significant unique proportion of variance in the dependent variable (sR^2 = .4344, F = 12.78, $p<.05$). Most of the work experience variables did have a significant relationship with commitment to teaching as a profession (Table 5).

1. Vocational agriculture teacher cohesion (r = .52).

2. Group attitudes toward teaching profession of vocational agriculture (r = .35).

3. Realization of expectations (r = .43).

4. First-job challenge (r = .59).

5. Personal importance (r = .64).

6. Self-image (r = .45).

The independent variables: profession work and individual actions, demonstrated low relationships (r = .25 and r = .28 respectively) with the dependent variable, commitment to teaching as a profession.

Attitude Prediction

The following variables were found by a stepwise regression analysis to be the best predictors (Table 6) of commitment to teaching as a profession by Ohio teachers of vocational agriculture:

1. Personal importance.

2. First-year job challenge.

3. Vocational agriculture teachers' cohesion.

4. Self-image.

Table 3

Correlations of Demographic Characteristic Variables and Commitment to Teaching

	Age	Being Female	Being Married	Tenure	Production	Mech.	Ag. Bus.	Hort.	Animal Care	Resources	Processing	Management	Traditional	Non Ag Ed Degree	Non Degree	Comt.
Age	1.000															
Being Female	-0.275[a]	1.000														
Being married	0.317[b]	-0.216	1.000													
Tenure	0.691[b]	-0.328[b]	0.232[a]	1.000												
Production	-0.062	-0.137	0.102	0.266[a]	1.000											
Mechanics	0.156	-0.134	0.080	-0.008	-0.513[b]	1.000										
Ag. Business	0.070	0.120	0.067	-0.095	-0.218[a]	-0.087	1.000									
Horticulture	-0.029	0.110	-0.347[b]	0.013	-0.393[b]	-0.157[c]	-0.067	1.000								
Animal Care	-0.008	0.358[b]	-0.121	-0.209[c]	-0.186[c]	-0.075	-0.032	-0.058	1.000							
Resources	-0.073	-0.070	0.082	-0.214[a]	-0.270[a]	-0.108	-0.046	-0.082	-0.040	1.000						
Processing	0.068	-0.040	0.047	-0.043	-0.153	-0.061	-0.026	-0.047	-0.022	-0.032	1.000					
Management	-0.094	0.154	0.058	-0.131	0.188[c]	-0.075	-0.032	-0.058	-0.028	-0.040	-0.022	1.000				
Traditional	-0.301[b]	0.088	0.036	0.148	0.638[b]	-0.496[b]	0.046	-0.216[c]	-0.104	-0.149	-0.127[c]	0.011	1.000			
Non Ag Ed Degree	0.322[b]	-0.102	-0.067	0.136	-0.160	-0.003	0.089	0.253[a]	0.121	-0.082	-0.047	-0.058	-0.456[b]	1.000		
Non Degree	0.104	-0.025	0.007	-0.259[a]	-0.588[b]	0.547[b]	-0.114	0.059	0.128	0.222[a]	0.228[a]	0.028	-0.778[b]	-0.205[c]	1.000	
Commitment	0.197[c]	-0.092	0.164[c]	0.029	0.070	-0.206[c]	-0.016	-0.050	0.043	0.065	0.079	0.179[c]	0.020	0.122	-0.108	1.000

Note. n = 112

[a]p< .01. [b]p<.001. [c]p< .05.

Table 4

Correlations of Job Characteristic Variables and Commitment to Teaching

	Skill Variety	Job Autonomy	Shared Responsibility	Credit for Work	Feedback	Commitment
Skill Variety	1.000					
Job autonomy	0.152	1.000				
Shared responsibility	0.097	0.038	1.000			
Credit for work	0.048	-0.009	0.357[a]	1.000		
Feedback	0.014	0.162[b]	-0.148	0.023	1.000	
Commitment	0.090	0.046	0.058	0.135	0.300[a]	1.000

Note. n = 104.

[a]p<.001. [b]p<.05.

Table 5

Correlations of Work Experience Variables and Commitment to Teaching

	Role Clarity	Cohesion	Group Att.	Prof. Work	Expec.	Job Chal.	Pers. Imp.	Ind. Actions	Self Image	Comt.
Role Clarity	1.000									
Cohesion	0.157	1.000								
Group attitude	0.215[a]	0.649[b]	1.000							
Profession-work	0.109	0.450[b]	0.658[b]	1.000						
Expectations	0.379[b]	0.433[b]	0.338[b]	0.209[a]	1.000					
Job challenge	0.359[b]	0.444[b]	0.434[b]	0.219[a]	0.499[b]	1.000				
Personal importance	0.251[c]	0.369[b]	0.329[b]	0.214[a]	0.397[b]	0.469[b]	1.000			
Individual actions	0.016	0.230[c]	0.215[a]	0.186[a]	0.302[b]	0.245[c]	0.282[c]	1.000		
Self image	0.063	0.348[b]	0.268[c]	0.199[a]	0.366[b]	0.377[b]	0.300[b]	0.290[b]	1.000	
Commitment	0.100	0.521[b]	0.354[b]	0.248[c]	0.429[b]	0.586[b]	0.641[b]	0.284[c]	0.454[b]	1.000

Note. n = 104.

[a]$p<.05$. [b]$p<.001$. [c]$p<.01$.

Table 6
Stepwise Multiple Regression of Commitment to Teaching Scores on the Significant Independent Variables

Independent Variables		R^2	R^2 Increment	F[a]
Personal importance	(X_1)	.4109	.4109	5.30
First-year job challenge	(X_2)	.5153	.1044	5.05
Vocational agriculture teachers' cohesion	(X_3)	.5598	.0445	2.73
Self-image	(X_4)	.5668	.0070	2.38

[a]$p<.05$.

The multiple regression equation with the respective calculated raw score partial regression weights (B's) and the intercept value (A) is:

$$Y = 1.12x_1 + .92x_2 + .54X_3 + 1.14X_4 + 18.03$$

This equation represents those significant variables which best predict commitment to teaching as a profession scores. The total multiple regression coefficient, $R^2 = .57$, represented the proportion of variance explained in the dependent variable by the equation.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Based upon the findings of this study, there appear to be certain significant factors contributing to being committed to teaching as a profession by Ohio teachers of vocational agriculture. Those factors are:

1. Personal importance (the extent to which Ohio vocational agriculture teachers feel that they are making significant and appreciated contributions to the profession). There does appear to be an overall increase in commitment to teaching as a profession scores as teachers realize that the work they do makes important contributions to the overall aims of the profession. Regular evaluations of vocational agriculture teachers' work are very necessary in order to find out how they are fulfilling the overall objectives of the profession. Merit rewards in the form of recognition and salary increase should be meted out to deserving teachers.

2. First-year job challenge: vocational agriculture teachers tend to be committed to teaching as a profession when they perceive that their jobs are interesting and challenging. The school authorities should acquaint the teachers at their initial entry to the profession with the overall objectives of the profession and what the profession

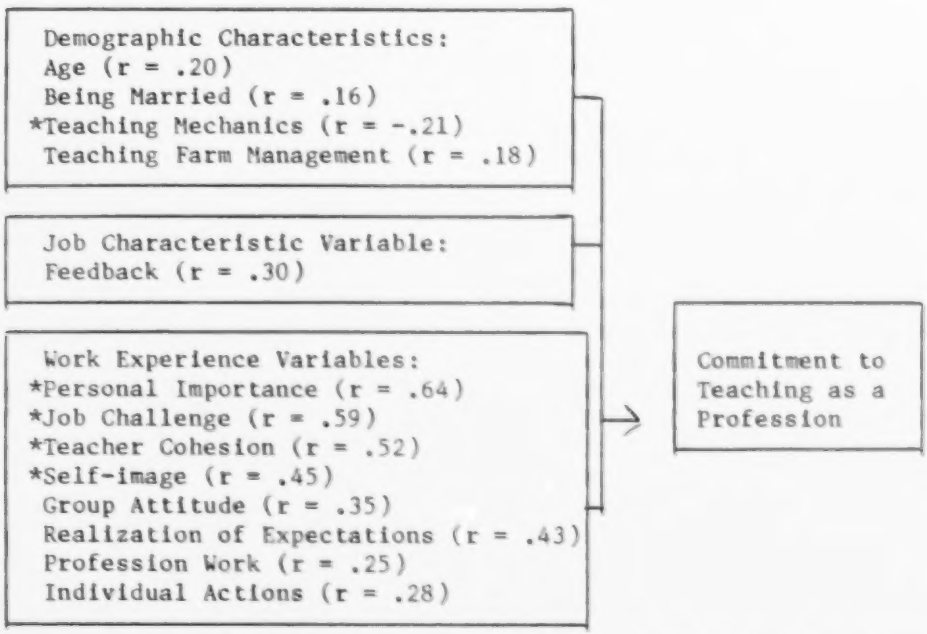
expects of its teachers. The orientation program is therefore very necessary. The profession is challenging and interesting, but teachers should be helped to internalize this.

3. Vocational agriculture teachers' cohesion. A tendency to stick together appears to effect a spirit of being committed to teaching as a profession by vocational agriculture teachers in Ohio.

4. Self-image reinforcement. The extent to which Ohio teachers of vocational agriculture are encouraged to behave in ways that represent their true feelings or attitudes appears to influence the degree of commitment to teaching as a profession.

Model

Based upon the findings and conclusions of this study, a model captioned "A Model of Commitment to Teaching as a Profession" (Figure 2), was restructured. The variables or factors included in the model were those which were significantly related to the dependent variable: commitment to teaching as a profession.


Demographic Characteristics:
Age (r = .20)
Being Married (r = .16)
*Teaching Mechanics (r = -.21)
Teaching Farm Management (r = .18)
Job Characteristic Variable:
Feedback (r = .30)
Work Experience Variables:
*Personal Importance (r = .64)
*Job Challenge (r = .59)
*Teacher Cohesion (r = .52)
*Self-image (r = .45)
Group Attitude (r = .35)
Realization of Expectations (r = .43)
Profession Work (r = .25)
Individual Actions (r = .28)
Commitment to Teaching as a Profession

*Significant semi-partial correlations ($p<.05$) with the dependent variable.

Figure 2. A Model of Commitment to Teaching as a Profession

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based upon the findings of this study, the following recommendations for further study have been generated:

1. Studies need to be conducted in search of additional demographic variables that might contribute toward being a committed teacher.

2. Studies should establish or set standards upon which evaluations of the work of Ohio teachers of vocational agriculture are based.

3. More studies on commitment to vocational agriculture teaching as a profession need to be conducted in other states than Ohio for comparison of findings.

4. Also, studies need to be conducted to examine the role the school authorities play in effecting a spirit of commitment to teaching vocational agriculture among their teachers.

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SUMMARY OF RESEARCH SERIESS

The enthusiasm which teachers carry to the classroom is probably in directed proportion to the level of commitment which teachers have for this profession. The enthusiasm of the teacher in turn affects the learning by the students. Therefore, exploratory studies which begin to help the profession describe and understand the phenomena related to commitment are warranted.

This summary is based on a Doctor of Philosophy thesis by Lugard A. Etuk under the direction of J. David McCracken. Dr. Etuk is a graduate in the Department of Agricultural Education, The Ohio State University. Special appreciation is due Dr. Vernon D. Luft, Department of Agricultural Education, North Dakota State University; Dr. Bob R. Stewart, Agricultural Education Department, University of Missouri-Columbia; and Dr. James Knight, Agricultural Education, The Ohio State University, for their critical review of this manuscript prior to its publication.

Research has been an important function of the Department of Agricultural Education since it was established in 1917. Research conducted by the Department has generally been in the form of graduate theses, staff studies and funded research. It is the purpose of this series to make useful knowledge from such research available to practitioners in the profession. Individuals desiring additional information on this topic should examine the references cited.

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